

Need of Agriculture Development in North Bihar

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Introduction:-Agricultural System on North Bihar has the potential to grow rapidly so as to meet the existing shortages and assume primacy in the national agricultural economy. The state has immense agricultural resources, to facilitate a Second Green Revolution in the Country. Bihar must aim at an annual agricultural rate of 5-6%. However, despite the strength of the agriculture sector, it is a paradox that this sector is growing at a snail's pace. The rate of growth has been below its potential. There has been a conspicuous failure to exploit those resources to the desired level. This study has endeavored to identify the factors behind the dismal performance of the sector.

A micro level analysis of the data shows that there are wide productivity differences among different regions in the State. From among the crop sector, yields of maize, gram and sunflower are higher than all India average, But area under all these crops is very small. The country at present suffers from a severe shortage of pulses and oils. Because of the development of poultry, demand for maize is also rising fast. The study has found that due to an appreciable increase in the irrigated area, there is likelihood of an increase of over 2 million hectares in the gross cropped area. If so, a major chunk of this area should be allocated to these crops to meet the national requirements and help bring sustained food security of the country.¹

Productivity levels in North Bihar compared with other states and all Indian average show huge gaps. The low productivity of major crops is to be examined in the light of poor infrastructure and institutional frame work. Add to the various agronomic factors like poor quality of

seed, unbalanced and inadequate use of fertilizers, practically no use of micro nutrients, little knowledge of pest management, lack of proper machinery and finally poor extension services.

Available data reveals that North Bihar is going to face the challenges of food security in the light of decreasing food production over the last decade. The current overall growth rate of farm production at the level of 2.5-20% due to shrinkage in cultivable area and changing global climate, the national and global food stock is expected to be at a comparatively lower level. Fortunately, North Bihar is uniquely placed to fill in the gap and provide the major granary for India, If proper strategic and policy directions are set for enhanced farm production.

It needs to be clearly borne in mind that business as usual will not yield the desired result in terms of achieving accelerated agriculture growth in North Bihar. If Bihar has to be put on the mainstream of India's development map, concerted efforts will have to be made on war footing. There is a need for an in-depth study of the factors responsible for low productivity level in the concerned regions which will provide the key to improve production. Applying new technology - Zero till bed planting for wheat, system for Rice Intensification (SRI) Technique for rice, Site specific Nutrient management for rice and wheat and hybrids for maize, encouraging results have been achieved within North Bihar itself on farmers' fields. These need to be developed larger scale for making North Bihar the 'Granary' of India and help India in maintaining food security.²

Taking care of these factors along with other local issues as discussed, the emerging production scenario for 2011-14, has been projected. It gives an additional production of 2 million tonnes each of rice and wheat, 3.4 million tonnes of maize, over 4 lakh tonnes of gram and over a million tonnes of oilseeds along with 9 million tonnes of sugarcane. The Government of India has a target of 10 million tonnes of rice, 8 million tonnes of wheat and 2 million tonnes of pulses under the XI plan. The Government of Bihar should take full advantage of the funds allocated under the Scheme for ensuring of high quality seed, fertilizer and large scale demonstration etc. and can thus become a major partner in this programme.

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The agro-climatic diversity in the State with its high rainfall distributed over a five-month monsoon and a reasonable long and moderate winter allows for a variety of horticultural crops to be grown. An analysis of horticulture production in North Bihar reveals that potential for significant increase in the horticulture production requires investments in all spheres- from institutional to crop management practices. Animal Husbandry and dairy are the subsidiary income generation activities for the rural poor of North Bihar. Therefore, the progress in this sector will result in more balanced development in the rural economy. The main strategy should be to increase the livestock production through controlled breeding programmes, strengthen the infrastructural facilities and to ensure animal health cover.

Soil conservation practices are very important for North Bihar which is ridden with floods and drought. The prime focus of organic agriculture is the management of soil organic matter to enhance the chemical, physical and biological properties of soil. The concept of feeding the soils rather than the plants forms the basis of the sustainable approach for organic farming in the State.

Agriculture is the single largest private sector occupation in the State and can be considered the riskiest business. Increasing income of the land owning and landless rural population through increased production by enhancing productivity and intensity of farming, and by generating more employment in agriculture and other rural based production activities alone is not the solution and there is a need to integrate these endeavours with effective risk management strategies to cover potential losses in yield and hence incomes. The most important lesson for Bihar is to capitalize on strength and convert weakness into opportunity through creation of infrastructure, adoption of technologies, strengthening of research, agricultural education and market orientation and agricultural enterprises. Success story of other states could also be tried as mode. Curx of the matter is that Bihar has the potentialities of being the forerunner of the Second Green Revolution. But the policy of 'business as usual' will not do. The state has to make efforts on a war footing, intensify their activity and implement the programmes at the ground level. The proper exploitation of opportunities in Bihar would be the opportunity for India to emerge as the economically sound nation in the world. This will based on a dynamic agriculture sector.³

One of the major implications is a vast financial requirement to implement the proposals during next 5-6 years against the current plan allocation of Rs.1,698 crores. Total required outlay for this period is estimated at Rs.270,055 crores. This level of outlays is fully justified to make Bihar the 'Granary' of India and a major hub of fruits and vegetables for both national and international markets, Recent field study sponsored by the Task Force (through APEDA) has revealed that Bihar has the capability to produce market expected products of fruits (including honey) and vegetables and there is already a demand for such products in U.K. Middle east, and mauritius. Another major expected impact is on Bihari farmers' income, employment, and general living standards.

Once agriculture gets revamped, income shall flow to villagers ensuring livelihood security, employment, and empowerment of women. It is expected that productivity of rice, wheat, maize, pulses, oilseeds, sugarcane would increase from 1.5/ha to 3.1 t/ha, 2.1 t/ha to 3.1 t/ha 2.7t/ha to 5t/ha, 7.3t/ha to 11.1t/ha, 1.1 to 1.4t/ha and 45.5t/ha to 70.5t/ha, respectively. The recent level of productivity of rice and wheat is shown in. Productivity of fruits and vegetable shall increase from current level of 11.0t/ha to 15t/ha and 16.5 to 20.0t/ha. New area of floricultures, medicinal and aromatic plants and spices shall emerge as largest producer of honey and organic produce. The general assessment if that current farm productivity level in Bihar is low in comparison to its potential. Therefore, in order to fully exploit the potential, there would be a need for much higher financial resources.⁴

Although North Bihar has established a good network for dairy, but health of animals continues to be poor and there is a lot of potential for improvements in animal's health and thus scope for addition in animal products and value addition in milk. Similarly huge water body is not appropriately utilized. The report aims to enhance the health of animals, improve the average milk productivity, establish poultry especially backyard poultry, and promote goatery, piggery and duckery. Intervention is expected to make livestock production economical - leading to sustainable reward to million of vulnerable farmers. Further production of fish is also expected to double in five years in the light of proposed strategy.

Implementation of the proposed strategy is expected to create employment of 45.000 million mandays besides making the state to

produce surplus food to meet the growing demand of the nation, as the state has rich land and water resources. This would empower the people and reverse the trend of going out of state for employment. Resultantly there shall be parity, equality and inclusive growth. This would also help the nation form emerging food insecurity.

Particular focus has been placed on human resource development with substantially enlarged financial outlays. It is believed that quality human resource at all the levels shall be the key to the success of programmes of development. Skill upgradation of officers, extension functionaries and farmers would be required having institutional arrangement. The trainers will also need training in new area of innovations to ensure upgraded skill development.

All these would require considerable efforts on monitoring and evaluation of implementation of various development project under the proposed strategies and policy direction. Since the proposals are bases on ground reality evaluation, which has come out after detailed deliberation with all the stakeholders, there be a need for developing implementable projects with a time fame, integrating all the efforts together in a 'Mission Mode' to address all the issues identified. Since the state has a poor infrastructure for delivery, it would also need strengthening.⁵ Therefore, with mission objectives, an empowered apex organization should be created which shall oversee the development, provide guidance and ensure effective implementation of the programme. The programme shall have midterm appraisal for its impact and midcourse correction.

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